

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 127777
ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

66011
DRAFTED BY:NEA/PAB:MHORNBLow
APPROVED BY:NEA/PAB:JACOON
NEA/IRN:MGREEN
NEA:RNEUMANN
S/S-O:DSUMMERS

-----069188 210231Z /23

R 200401Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN 0000

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 127777

EXDIS

FOL KABUL 3934 SENT ACTION SECSTATE MAY 15, 1978 REPEATED
TO YOU QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 3934

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GFG
TAGS: SHUM, AF
SUBJECT: CRITICAL HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: KABUL 3933

1. REFTTEL OUTLINES THE ARRESTS AND EXECUTIONS BEING WIDELY
REPORTED AS CARRIED OUT BY THE NEW REGIME IN AFGHANISTAN.
UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES, IN MY VIEW, CAN WE OR SHOULD WE
IGNORE THESE EVENTS. THEY REPRESENT GROSS VIOLATIONS OF
HUMAN RIGHTS. WE IGNORE THEM ONLY IF WE ARE WILLING TO
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OVERLOOK OUR OWN HUMAN RIGHTS PRINCIPLES. THE QUESTIONS IS
NOT WHETHER WE DO SOMETHING -- BUT WHAT WE DO.

2. GIVEN ITS IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND, THE NEW REGIME IS
UNLIKELY TO BE EASILY SWAYED BY REPRESENTATIONS FROM US ON
BEHALF OF AFGHANS WHO IT CONSIDERS REPRESENT A "TYRANNICAL,
DESPOTIC ARISTOCRACY". MOREOVER, THE ACTIONS THE REGIME

IS TAKING AGAINST THESE PEOPLE ACCORD WITH AN AFGHAN CULTURAL TRADITION WHICH INCLUDES A STRONG ADHERENCE TO THE CONCEPT OF REVENGE. THE NEW LEADERS OF AFGHANISTAN, IN PERSECURING MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY OF THE "NADERI DYNASTY," ARE, BY THEIR LIGHTS, AVENGING 50 YEARS OF PERSECUTION AND MISRULE. THEY SEE FORMER GOVERNMENT LEADERS WHO SERVED THAT DYNASTY IN THE SAME LIGHT.

3. I ALSO CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD NOT MAKE REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS. SUCH REPRESENTATIONS MIGHT CAUSE THE NEW LEADERSHIP TO SUSPECT THAT WE HAVE SPECIAL TIES WITH SUCH PEOPLE AND WOULD INCREASE THE DANGER TO THE PEOPLE INVOLVED.

4. THE ONLY PRACTICAL COURSE FOR US, THEN, IS TO MAKE GENERAL REPRESENTATIONS IN THE HOPE THAT THE NEW REGIME WILL CARE ENOUGH ABOUT ITS INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION, AND ENOUGH ABOUT MAINTAINING THE FIG LEAF OF NONALIGNMENT THROUGH GOOD RELATIONS WITH US, TO RELENT FROM THE HARSH TREATMENT IT IS METING OUT TO SOME OF ITS PERCEIVED ENEMIES. TO HAVE ANY CHANCE OF BEING EFFECTIVE OUR REPRESENTATIONS MUST BE TO CHAIRMAN TARAHI HIMSELF.

5. WE SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER ALERTING ORGANIZATIONS LIKE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TO THE SITUATION HERE. INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION MIGHT HAVE SOME EFFECT ON TARAHI
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AND COMPANY. THE DEPARTMENT CAN JUDGE FAR BETTER THAN I HOW TO GO ABOUT AROUSING INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION. I WOULD ONLY SUGGEST THAT IT BE DONE IN A WAY THAT IT NOT BE SEEN HERE AS PURELY AMERICAN PRESSURE.

6. AS FOR AN APPROACH BY US TO TARAHI, I SEE TWO POSSIBILITIES:

A. I COULD SEEK A MEETING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS. I WOULD TELL HIM THAT THE USG IS GREATLY CONCERNED AND ALARMED BY REPORTS REACHING US FROM A NUMBER OF SOURCES THAT HIS GOVERNMENT IS EXECUTING SOME FORMER OFFICIALS AND IMPRISONING A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE, INCLUDING WOMEN AND CHILDREN, WITHOUT, AS FAR AS CAN BE SEEN, DUE PROCESS OF LAW. I WOULD REMIND HIM OF OUR FIRST CONVERSATION TOUCHING ON HUMAN RIGHTS (KABUL 3619) AND SAY THAT IT IS NOT OUR BUSINESS TO JUDGE WHETHER GIVEN INDIVIDUALS HAVE COMMITTED CRIMES PUNISHABLE UNDER AFGHAN LAW BUT THAT WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE LEGAL PROCESSES BEING USED AND ABOUT REPORTS OF PUNISHMENT OF SEEMINGLY COMPLETELY INNOCENT PEOPLE SUCH AS WOMEN AND CHILDREN. I WOULD ADD THAT THE USG, AS I HAVE TOLD HIM BEFORE, WANTS TO HAVE CLOSE AND FRIENDLY

RELATIONS WITH HIS GOVERNMENT, BUT THAT WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE EFFECT ON AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AND HENCE ON OUR RELATIONS OF REPORTED VIOLATIONS OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS.

B. ANOTHER APPROACH WOULD BE TO HAVE ME DELIVER A WRITTEN OR ORAL MESSAGE TO TARAKI FROM PRESIDENT CARTER. I STRONGLY PREFER THIS APPROACH BECAUSE TARAKI WOULD BE FLATTERED TO RECEIVE A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT, AND OUR REPRESENTATIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD LIKELY BE BETTER RECEIVED BY HIM. THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE COULD BEGIN BY WISHING TARAKI WELL AS HE ASSUMES THE BURDENS OF LEADERSHIP IN HIS COUNTRY AND IN HIS EFFORTS TO RAISE THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN. CONFIDENTIAL

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IT COULD REITERATE OUR TRADITIONAL POLICY OF SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN INDEPENDENCE AND REGIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY. IT COULD THEN TAKE UP THE MATTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS ALONG THE LINES OF PARA 6 (A) ABOVE.

7. WHATEVER WE DO, I THINK THE SITUATION IS URGENT BECAUSE THE LIVES OF MANY PEOPLE ARE CURRENTLY AT STAKE. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE FROM PREVIOUS EXCHANGES ON THIS SUBJECT I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO TAKE THIS SUBJECT UP WITH THE NEW REGIME IN THE COMPANY OF THE ENTIRE DIPLOMATIC CORPS. MY COLLEAGUES WILL NOT AGREE TO MAKE A JOINT REPRESENTATION, AND THEREFORE WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO PROCEED ON OUR OWN AS AT LEAST ONE OF THEM (A MUSLIM) HAS ALREADY DONE WITH SOME SUCCESS.

8. I ALSO DO NOT THINK IT ADVISABLE AT THIS STATE TO LINK OUR HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS WITH OUR AID PROGRAM HERE. TARAKI WOULD TAKE ANY SUCH LINKAGE AS A THREAT AND SUCH A LINKAGE WOULD THEREFORE GREATLY DAMAGE OUR HUMAN RIGHTS CASE WITH HIM. MOREOVER, OUR AID PROGRAM IS IMPORTANT TO US BOTH IN TERMS OF ENCOURAGING AFGHAN NONALIGNMENT AND IN TERMS OF HELPING SOME OF THE WORLD'S POOREST PEOPLE.

9. TO CONCLUDE, LET ME SAY THAT THIS IS SUCH A SENSITIVE AND IMPORTANT MATTER THAT I CERTAINLY DO NOT FEEL I HAVE A MONOPOLY OF WISDOM ON HOW TO PROCEED. HOW IT IS HANDLED COULD HAVE CONSIDERABLE EFFECT ON OUR FUTURE RELATIONS WITH THE NEW AFGHAN REGIME. I WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING INSTRUCTIONS PROMPTLY. ELIOT UNQUOTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 may 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE127777
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA/PAB:MHORNBLOW
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780213-0773
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780538/aaaabfld.tel
Line Count: 166
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e96b179a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 KABUL 3933
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2628614
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CRITICAL HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN
TAGS: SHUM, AF, US
To: TEHRAN
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e96b179a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014